

In My Own Words

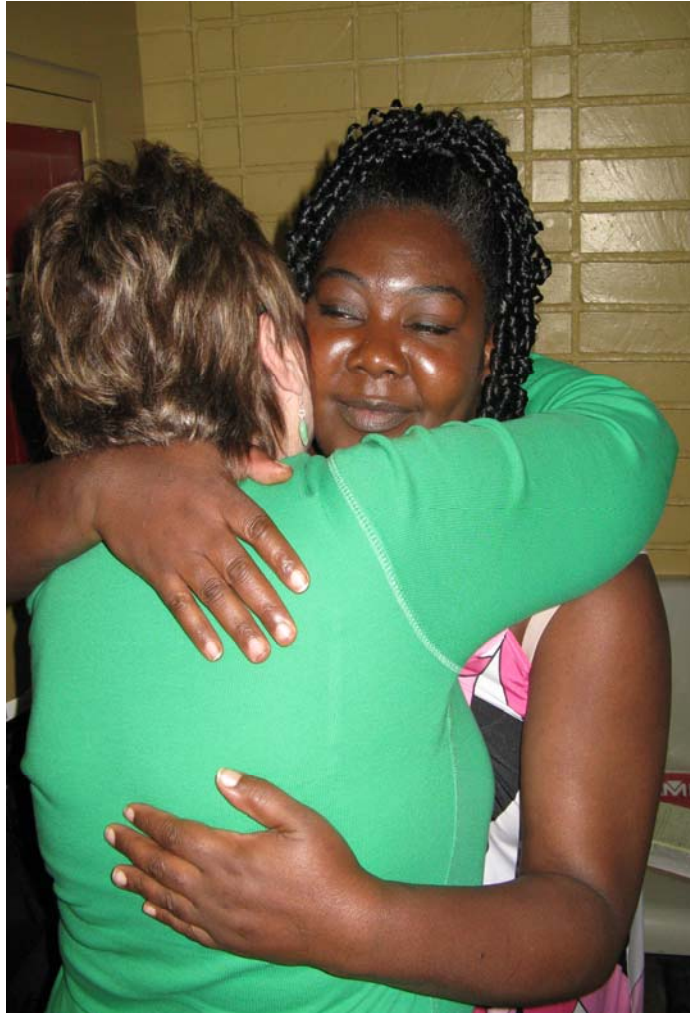
# “Bowling to Recovery”

Written by: Leslie Hayes

**DID YOU KNOW?** Arcadia Mental Health Center’s Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funded Full Service Partnership (FSP) Office is located in Monrovia.

The goal of the MHSA funded FSP Office is to reduce the negative outcomes that result from untreated mental illness, including suicide, incarceration, unemployment, prolonged suffering, homelessness and removal of children from their family homes.

Preliminary outcomes of the MHSA FSP programs reveal that psychiatric hospitalizations have been reduced statewide from 38% to 7% over a one year period.



The Mental Health Services Act Full Service Partnership Program in Monrovia saved her life and now she is on the road to hope, wellness and recovery.

Photographs by Ken Kondo



**THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (MHSA) FULL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP (FSP) PROGRAM SAVED HER LIFE:** Leslie Hayes has been visiting the Arcadia Mental Health Center's MHSA funded (FSP) Monrovia Office for one year since her release from Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Century Regional Detention Facility. She is in now in recovery. Minds and Matters caught up with her at AMF Bowling Center in Arcadia.

**M**y name is Leslie Hayes. I want to tell my story because I want those suffering from mental illness to know there is hope and a future.

I grew up as a child playing volleyball, baseball and karate. Throughout my childhood, I heard voices but at the time I did not think much of it. Little did I know that it would later be diagnosed as mental illness.

I graduated from a Special Education Adult School in Monrovia and earned my certificate as a Nursing Assistant from the Graduate Center in Azusa. From 1982-1984, I worked for the Edgewood Center helping handicapped patients. After that I worked for several other medical facilities, including Hillhaven Convalescent Hospital.

The voices that haunted me during my childhood became louder—to the point that I began to search for ways to numb my pain and the voices. The voices temporarily went away with drugs. It felt good, as I felt nothing, but after the “hit” was over, the voices became even louder and my pain increased. My drug habit was about \$500 a day. My work performance began to deteriorate and finally it cost me my certification. To make up for paying for my habit, I began “scheming” by using my mouth in talking big to the drug dealers in order to get my fix. My world crashed down on me and little did I know it was all due to my mental illness.

I did not seek help because I was fearful of being labeled “crazy” by my family and the community.

I told myself that I was not crazy, but I was not in control of what I was doing. At age 27, I finally asked for help. My past as a drug addict caught up to me and I was sent to Acton Rehabilitation Center. There I met a psychiatrist named Diane. While at the center, I participated in substance abuse counseling and Diane helped me get over the experience of being abused as a child. I was finally able to admit that at age eight I had been an abused child. The voices I heard came from authoritarian male and female figures. I also learned that not talking about them compounded my illness. I was ashamed to talk about it with my family, so I stayed away from them. I was homeless for years living in various parts of Monrovia.

I thought I had everything under control, but I got into trouble again. This time, I was sent to the Century Regional Detention Facility for Women in Lynwood. I was assigned to the substance abuse/mental health special unit.

It is hard to believe that I am a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic. This is my illness, and what caused me to spiral out of control. Part of the deal I made with the judge and probation officer was to spend one year at Olive Vista Institute for Mental Diseases (IMD). I did it and completed the program. Another part of my condition of probation was to enroll in the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funded Full Service Partnership (FSP) program located near my board and care as one of the conditions of my release into the community.

I am excited about being in the MHSA funded FSP program. My life has changed for the better, thanks to my case manager and substance abuse counselor, Debra, who is helping me on the road to recovery. My self-esteem is better than it has ever been in my life, and I have a group of friends who understand and share my experiences with mental illness. I participate in various activities as part of the FSP program, but my favorite is bowling. It's only my second time doing this, but what I enjoy is not only the joy of trying to knock down the pins, but getting to spend time with my friends who share my burden. I bowled a 56, that included throwing a pair of strikes where all of the pins fell down. I never realized that I was missing out on the joys of life.

**The MHSA funded FSP program literally saved my life.** If there wasn't a program like this available, I would probably be dead or in jail. I know I have not been the model client to work with, but I thank the staff at Arcadia Mental Health's FSP program for helping me to stay on the right path and showing me that recovery is possible. I cannot do this alone. I tell the new clients in the FSP program, if I can do it, then you can do it too.